

HOUSE FINANCE COMMITTEE
March 26, 2021
2:01 p.m.

2:01:39 PM

CALL TO ORDER

Co-Chair Merrick called the House Finance Committee meeting to order at 2:01 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Neal Foster, Co-Chair
Representative Kelly Merrick, Co-Chair
Representative Dan Ortiz, Vice-Chair
Representative Ben Carpenter (via teleconference)
Representative Bryce Edgmon
Representative Andy Josephson
Representative Bart LeBon
Representative Sara Rasmussen
Representative Adam Wool

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative DeLena Johnson
Representative Steve Thompson

ALSO PRESENT

Representative Zack Fields, Sponsor; Sara Perman, Staff,
Representative Louise Stutes.

PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE

Connor Bell, Fiscal Analyst, Legislative Finance Division;
Colleen Glover, Director, Tax Division, Department of
Revenue; William Webber Sr., Self, Cordova; Kim Aspelund,
Self, Cordova; Mike Webber, Self, Cordova; Katrina
Hoffmann, Self, Cordova; Mike Lesmann, Legislative Liaison,
Department of Transportation and Public Facilities.

SUMMARY

HB 27 NAMING IRENE WEBBER BRIDGE

HB 27 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

HB 128 USE OF INTERNET FOR CHARITABLE GAMING

HB 128 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

Co-Chair Merrick reviewed the agenda for the day.

#hb128

HOUSE BILL NO. 128

"An Act relating to charitable gaming online ticket sales and activities."

2:02:18 PM

REPRESENTATIVE ZACK FIELDS, SPONSOR, briefly reintroduced the bill. House Bill 128 ensured that charitable gaming operators could sell raffle tickets online. It would extend an authority established by regulation for the pandemic and proved to be beneficial in all circumstances.

Co-Chair Merrick indicated Representative Edgmon had joined the meeting. She asked Connor Bell from the Legislative Finance Division to review the fiscal note.

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CONNOR BELL, FISCAL ANALYST, LEGISLATIVE FINANCE DIVISION, reviewed the fiscal note associated with the legislation. The bill would allow for certain charitable gaming activities to be conducted online. The Department of Revenue (DOR) would need to establish standards for online ticket sales and guidelines. The department did not expect any change in revenues or operating expenditures and would be able to make any needed changes with its current resources. He indicated that while there might be some revenue impact, the total impact to the state for gaming was about \$500,000 per year. Therefore, any impact to state revenue would be relatively small.

Co-Chair Merrick reported Representative Wool had joined the meeting.

Representative Wool asked Mr. Bell if state gaming revenue totaled about \$500 million. He asked if the figure included all charitable gaming. Mr. Bell responded positively and clarified that the figure was net of expenses related to the administration of the tax. The amount did not reflect gross receipts.

Co-Chair Merrick invited Ms. Glover from the Tax Division to comment.

Mr. Connor added that the total UGF revenue from charitable gaming was about \$2.4 million in FY 20. Representative Wool clarified that the net revenue for charitable gaming after expenses was \$500,000. Mr. Bell thought the number was correct based on the fiscal note. The Department of Revenue could provide additional information.

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COLLEEN GLOVER, DIRECTOR, TAX DIVISION, DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE (via teleconference), reported that the annual proceeds for all charitable gaming revenue was \$2.4 million. The majority of revenue came from pull tab taxes comprising approximately \$2.0 million of the \$2.5 million in gaming revenues. The bill did not impact the pull tab tax. The other revenue to the state included a net proceeds fee (net proceeds on on proceeds over \$20,000). There were also license and permit fees of about \$500,000 per year. Those would be the only proceeds impacted by the bill.

Representative Wool asked whether it would make a significant revenue impact if there was a sudden surge in ticket sales. Ms. Glover replied that it would take a large quantity of additional sales to generate significant revenue. Representative Wool queried about Bingo revenues. Ms. Glover responded that Bingo comprised about 10 percent of the \$500,000 in gaming revenues.

Representative LeBon noted the non-profit community participating in Bingo or other gaming events realized a significant benefit. He spoke based on his tenure on the Fairbanks Downtown Association. The association was a beneficiary of a downtown Bingo operation. He wondered how much a non-profit community would benefit.

Representative Fields had heard that some non-profits had doubled their income on certain events even during the pandemic. He thought it was surprising in a positive way. He hoped it was the case more broadly with the authority in the legislation. Only time would tell whether there would be gains on a sustained basis.

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Co-Chair Merrick OPENED public testimony.

[2:09:42 PM](#)

Co-Chair Merrick CLOSED public testimony.

Co-Chair Merrick indicated amendments were due by noon on Sunday, March 28, 2021. She intended to take up amendments on Monday and pass the bill out of committee if possible.

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AT EASE

[2:10:49 PM](#)

RECONVENED

#hb27

HOUSE BILL NO. 27

"An Act naming the irene Webber Bridge."

[2:10:57 PM](#)

SARA PERMAN, STAFF, REPRESENTATIVE LOUISE STUTES, introduced HB 27. She reported that the 3-line bill simply renamed an unidentified bridge in Cordova, known formally by the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT) as Bridge 406 Scott Glacier #6 to the irene Webber Bridge. She relayed that irene Webber was a Cordovan who passed away in 2018. Naming the specified bridge after her would serve to remind her Cordovan friends and neighbors of the legacy she left behind.

Ms. Perman continued that irene was an Alutiiq woman born in Ellamar near Tatitlek. She later moved to Cordova where she raised her family. irene along with her husband and their three children ran a seining operation in Prince William Sound. irene was best remembered as an avid runner.

She was not a life-long runner, rather, she began running as an adult. Earlier in life irene struggled with alcohol dependency. As she got sober, she turned to running. Her daughter, Kim, shared that running empowered and invigorated her mom.

Ms. Perman relayed that in pursuing her passion, irene founded the Cordova Running Club and was integral in founding many of the local running events. She was likely best remembered for running and founding the sole King Salmon Marathon in 1986. She decided to run it and did a full marathon length. Thirty-five years latter and in addition to the King Salmon Marathon, there was the Sockeye Half Marathon, the Coho 10 K, the Humpy 5 K, and the Smooth 1-mile Fun Run. The runs paralleled the Cordova Salmon runs and 200 to 300 people attended each year. In addition to working with the runs, irene was integral in creating the Cancer 2 x 2 walks and the Sudden Infant Death Bike-a-thon in Cordova.

Ms. Perman wanted to share a few anecdotes she learned from family members. Her daughter, Kim, shared that on the boat, "Dad may have been the captain of the boat, but Mom was always the admiral." Kim also shared that everyone in town knew irene, and it was common for people to call her, "Grandma irene." irene liked to honk her horn and wave every time she saw runners on the road.

Ms. Perman noted that the spelling of irene's name was always spelled with a lower case "i" which was how irene spelled it. A friend spoke that it was diminutive in figure, and irene did not consider herself larger than everybody else. The family requested that her name be spelled with a lower case "i" on any signage.

Ms. Perman continued that the bridge in question was 9.5 miles between Cordova city center and the airport. The bridge crossed the Scott River and looked back towards the Scott Glacier. Notably, the Cordova Marathon and the Half Marathon Salmon runs spanned over the area. The area was also known as a local hub for recreation and contained the 9 Mile Sand Pile, an area for picnicking and other activities. The area had 4-wheeling, snow machining, and forest service trails nearby. The family identified with the area because it was an area where families spent time together.

Ms. Perman pointed out that there were two resolutions in members': one from the City of Cordova and one from the Native Village of Eyak supporting the bill. Additionally, there was a fiscal note from DOT in the amount of \$10,158 and was associated with the cost of materials for the signs including the signage, the posts, the sauna tubes, and the installation. She was happy to answer any questions the committee might have.

Representative Edgmon spoke in support of the bill. He had seen the bill in a prior session, but it did not make it to the finish line before the session ended. He thought the story was very uplifting and it was appropriate to name the bridge after an ordinary citizen yet an unsung hero. He recalled that irene became a runner in her fifties. Ms. Perman thought his guesstimate was close. Representative Edgmon believed irene was an Alaska Native. He thought it was amazing for someone to become a walker in their fifties and even more remarkable to become a runner in their fifties. He reiterated his support of the bill.

Representative Rasmussen spoke in support of the legislation. She thought anytime the legislature could recognize an outstanding Alaskan woman was an effort she could happily support. She was excited to hear from the family and appreciated the respectful and appropriate remarks made about Ms. Webber.

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WILLIAM WEBBER SR., SELF, CORDOVA (via teleconference), spoke fondly of his wife, irene. He provided a little background about her life and revealed her addiction to alcohol. She sought help to recover from her alcoholism which saved their marriage. He indicated they had three children and several grandchildren. She started running to take care of her health at which time she started a running club. She got many community members running. The marathons attracted people from all over the country. He missed his wife since she passed away.

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KIM ASPELUND, SELF, CORDOVA (via teleconference), irene's daughter, considered her mom a very inspirational person. She admired her mom dealing with her drinking addiction. Ms. Aspelund was a runner in college and taught her mom how

to run. irene was a strong Aleut woman who worked hard on the family boat in the summers and was the root of the family. The family missed irene very much. She thought the naming of the bridge after her mother was a perfect dedication. She inspired the community with her ambition with the American Cancer Society and raising money for Saint Jude's. She started many events in Cordova that remained in place over several years. A proclamation for "irene Webber Day" was issued by the mayor years prior because of irene being an inspirational and passionate person. She thanked the committee.

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MIKE WEBBER, SELF, CORDOVA (via teleconference), irene's son, fully supported HB 27. His mother had a big heart. She was also known for being a very strong and competitive fisherwoman. He spoke of her running the beaches in several fishing areas around the state. She touched many people's hearts through her inspiration. He thought it was a huge honor to see his mother's name on the highway in Cordova. He considered his mother a hero in the community of Cordova and the family. He appreciated members supporting the bill and thanked the committee for the opportunity to share.

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KATRINA HOFFMANN, SELF, CORDOVA (via teleconference), was impressed with the legacy that irene left behind. She mentioned the philanthropic work irene did in support of Saint Jude's Hospital and the American Cancer Society. She thought irene was a woman worth honoring. She described the site around the bridge.

Co-Chair Merrick relayed there were folks online to review the fiscal note.

[2:28:46 PM](#)

MIKE LESMANN, LEGISLATIVE LIAISON, DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC FACILITIES (via teleconference), reported that the costs associated with the fiscal note were material costs only. He mentioned that the costs of the signs had increased since the prior bill was introduced in the previous legislative session, specifically the cost of aluminum. There were several things to considered when DOT constructed and placed traffic signs. The Department of

Transportation and Public Facilities provided the services in accordance with a document, The Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), by the Federal Highway Administration. The department had an accompanying manual, The Alaska Traffic Manual, that spoke to some of the state's more unique and specific circumstances in Alaska. He noted that the MUTCD was the nation's guidebook and was supported by all of the DOTs across the United States. Like the National Conference of State Legislatures which provided good research information and best practices guidelines to legislatures, state transportation agencies belonged to the American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO). He was happy to provide additional information.

[2:31:38 PM](#)

Co-Chair Merrick OPENED public testimony.

[2:31:55 PM](#)

Co-Chair Merrick CLOSED public testimony.

Co-Chair Merrick indicated amendments were due by Sunday, March 28, 2021 at noon.

Representative LeBon complimented the Webber family for their inspirational testimony. He thanked family members for calling in to testify.

Co-Chair Merrick reviewed the agenda for the following meeting on Monday, March 29, 2021.

ADJOURNMENT

[2:32:51 PM](#)

The meeting was adjourned at 2:32 p.m.